



BAM!

A Quarterly Publication of
the Bamako AID Mission

March, 2004

Volume 1, Issue 2

Here We Come Again!

Our second edition of the newsletter took a bit longer to publish than we originally planned. Our "Editor-in-Chief" unexpectedly took off for Sri Lanka necessitating a bit of an adjustment on our part. More importantly though, we wanted our readers to get a sense of the exciting new activities that have been happening, including several within the past few weeks. This year we've had the formal



**Mission Director
Pamela White**

launch of several major activities in the Health, Education and Economic Growth sectors. Recently, we also participated in a groundbreaking ceremony for a new irrigation canal that highlights USAID's commitment to help Mali use the resources of the Niger River as productively and responsibly as possible. We sponsored a fact-finding trip to South Africa in an effort to observe biotechnology innovations. As you will discover when you read these articles there are a heck of a lot of interesting activities underway and we look forward to keeping you up to date on developments as they unfold in the weeks and months ahead. —

Pamela White



Photo: Steve Cowper

FIGHTING MALARIA—*Health care workers demonstrate the correct method in which to apply insecticide to bed nets. USAID joined forces with the First Lady of Mali and two government ministries to launch a campaign to distribute 70,000 bed nets to the most vulnerable. See story page 4.*

New Irrigation Canal Promises Opportunity for Thousands *Thirty-year wait almost over*

NIONO—Hundreds turned out for a colorful ceremony marking the groundbreaking for a new irrigation canal being constructed through USAID financing in the *Office du Niger* zone of Mali.

The chants of *griots* (praise singers), lilting *kora* (traditional stringed instrument) music and drumming filled the air interrupted occasionally by the sound of gunfire emanating from old hunting rifles discharged overhead by the mysterious dancing *chasseurs*. The entertainment warmed up the crowd for the arrival of the dignitaries and the commencement of the formal part of the proceedings.

The Kolodougou canal or KL-4 as it is more commonly called is a project that had been originally requested by villagers some thirty years ago. After such a lengthy wait perhaps one should not be too surprised to witness so much enthusiasm on display.

USAID/Mali in its new country strategy emphasizes improved water management as an essential component of food security and economic growth in drought-prone Mali. President Touré has pledged to bring 50,000 hectares of additional land under irrigation by the end of his five-year term in 2007. This is an enormous task for Mali, despite being blessed with having 1,750 kilometers of the mighty Niger River flowing through it. The *Office du Niger* zone of central Mali encompasses one million hectares of land and possesses enormous potential for gravity-fed irrigation thanks to the Markala dam, which regulates the flow of the Niger River and three primary irrigation canals. The primary canals feed into a network of secondary canals which in turn feed into a network of tertiary canals. The primary and secondary canals are maintained by the *Office du Niger* with funding from the central

(Continued on page 3)

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Promoting Vitamin A	Page 2
Saved by the Radio	Page 2
Cleaning up Bamako	Page 3
Jimmy Carter in Mali	Page 3
The Fight Against Malaria	Page 4
Education Program Lifts Off	Page 5
Finance and Trade	Page 5
Biotech Visit to South Africa	Page 5
Health through Sanitation	Page 6
Niger Youth Center	Page 6

Vitamin A Supplementation: Key to Reducing Child Mortality

BAMAKO—Between January 21 and March 5, 2004, the second autonomous vitamin A supplementation campaign conducted outside the National Immunization Days campaign was organized throughout the country, under the leadership of the Nutrition Division of the Ministry of Health (MOH), with financial and technical support from UNICEF, Helen Keller International and USAID through Abt Associates. Mali's eight regions and Bamako mobilized under the label of "Intensive Nutrition Activity Week" (*Semaine d'intensification des activités de nutrition*). The most recent activity follows on the heels of the successes achieved during a similar campaign held during June-July 2003. In addition to vitamin A distribution, the campaign promoted messages on breastfeeding, consumption of iodized salt and best practices in infant feeding. The MOH's health communication and education center, as well as the national radio and TV office contributed to mobilizing the population for the campaign.

Vitamin A supplementation is a proven, highly cost effective intervention for reducing under-five mortality. Just by providing vitamin A supplements twice a year to children under five years old, child mortality can be cut by 23%. In Mali, the

estimated number of children 6-59 months who are at risk of vitamin A deficiency is estimated to be 1,663,200 representing 79% of children in this age group. Given current mortality rates, adequate vitamin A supplementation in this age group can help prevent 27,000 deaths annually.

Another way to provide adequate vitamin A is to promote the consumption of foods rich in vitamin A, which should be undertaken as part of a comprehensive national strategy. For instance, appropriate consumption of palm oil can be promoted, and plans currently underway for the fortification of cooking oil produced in Mali should be speeded up.

The contribution of vitamin A as a weapon in the campaign to reduce under-five mortality rates in Mali can be economic and effective through nationwide campaigns. However, the way forward should focus on winning support from decision makers at all levels so that vitamin A supplementation becomes part of the routine promotional and preventive health activities at the health clinic level. Vitamin A supplementation saves lives, it is easy to do, and is being done successfully in Mali!—SZ

Saved by the Radio: a Success Story

DIAFARABE—This is the story about a remarkable service rendered by a community radio station to the people of an isolated village deep in the interior of Mali. Diafarabé is a rural commune located about 500 kilometers from Bamako in the heart of the Niger Central Delta between Ségou and Mopti. Cattle breeding, farming and fishing are the principal economic activities of the commune's 13,500 residents. For hundreds of years, it has been the scene of the annual cattle crossing of the Niger River.

Geographically, the commune is almost totally landlocked, especially during the rainy season as roads become impassable. Diafarabé is an island essentially from August to September when the water level of the Niger River reaches its peak. An old dyke built more than 50 years ago surrounds the commune to help protect it from floods during the rainy season.

In order to reduce the community's isolation and to support development actions initiated by the local government, communal authorities and citizens asked USAID for assistance to establish a community radio station. On August 24, 2003 the radio station began broadcasting over a radius of 70 kilometers, thus covering all ten villages in the commune and even others in the vicinity.

On September 2, 2003, barely 10 days after the radio station began operating, 102 millimeters of rain fell within a 24-hour

period drenching the village. According to village elders, it had not rained that heavily for over 30 years.

Around 10:00 pm, while almost everybody in the village was asleep, two young men, out for an evening stroll during a respite from the rain, noticed that the dyke protecting the village from flooding on its eastern side had given way. Water from the river had already started pouring in, adding to the flooding caused by the rainfall earlier in the day. Suddenly, Diafarabé was staring a flooding disaster right between the eyes.



Photo: Moussa Bambara

VIEW FROM DYKE— *The repaired dyke at Diafarabé stands guard over the Niger River.*

One of the young men ran to the radio station, which was about to sign off for the evening. On hearing of the damage to the dyke, the broadcaster immediately made calls appealing for assistance. Within a short period, the entire population was mobilized to repair the dyke. Both men and women, the young and the old of Diafarabé turned out in the darkness with torches and lamps in hand. Bags were filled with sand and the people toiled throughout the night to mend the broken dyke and stem the rush of water pouring into the village. Very early the following morning, neighboring villagers, who were also alerted by the radio broadcast chartered sand-laden canoes to come and lend a helping hand to their neighbors.

This is how, thanks to its little radio station, Diafarabé was saved from flooding. The population is rightfully proud of it and thankful to USAID for this investment, which was a real lifesaver.—AD

USAID Joins Forces with the City Government to Clean Up Bamako

BAMAKO—The International City/County Management Association (ICMA) has embarked on a new activity in Mali under the auspices of the CityLinks Program funded by USAID/Mali to aid the District of Bamako with the management of municipal waste. On January 16, 2004 a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the District of Bamako and the government of Athens-Clarke County of Georgia, USA to serve as ICMA's partners in an effort to improve

the solid waste management system in Bamako.

The partners are developing an Action Plan for specific solid waste management projects aimed at improving the overall system. The plan will identify concrete activities to address key governance, public administration and management issues.—**MF**

Jimmy Carter Visits Mali

BAMAKO—Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and his wife Rosalynn arrived in Bamako on February 5, 2004 on the final leg of a three-nation West African tour that initially saw them visit Togo and Ghana. The Carters were in Mali to highlight the efforts of the Carter Center to eradicate Guinea Worm disease and to launch a new development and cooperation initiative. This initiative will focus on institutional and regulatory reform of the Malian administration and capacity building for development planning and management.

During their one-day sojourn in Bamako, the Carters were the guests of honor at a dinner hosted by President Touré and held meetings with the Prime Minister and other top Malian officials. USAID was the site for an information exchange and discussion with the donor community chaired by Pam White. They also managed to squeeze in some time in their busy schedule to greet the staff of the U.S. Mission and Peace Corps volunteers.

Before returning to the United States, the former First Couple rounded off their trip with two days of sightseeing and relaxation in Mali's famed Dogon Country.—**MD**



Photo: Sana Guindo

CARTER VISIT—President and Mrs. Carter with President Touré of Mali (center) at the Presidential Palace.

Irrigation canal . . . (Continued from page 1)

government and with funds raised through user fees. The tertiary canals are under the control of private investors or village-level cooperatives, and are used to irrigate individual fields.

The KL-4 canal is an extension of an existing secondary canal. Though only 4.7 kilometers in length, the new canal will permit 960 hectares of land to be developed for irrigation. The potential impact of the investment is substantial. First, farmers working the land will no longer be at the mercy of fickle rainfall. Second, productivity will be increased since crop yields will be multiplied several times. Third, women will benefit through the anticipated increase in horticultural production, which is largely dominated by women farmers. Fourth, it is expected that the project will serve to stimulate greater value-added processing of crops due to the involvement of private investors.

Two-thirds of the land will be reserved for 1,000 small farmers residing in 13 villages in the zone. USAID is financing the construction of tertiary canals and drains over 347 hectares or slightly more than one-third of the land area. This work is done in partnership with the technical assistance of the *Office du Niger* and villagers who are providing sweat equity. Another one-third of the land will be developed by villagers independently and 320 hectares will be made available for development by private investors. In addition, USAID and the *Office du Niger* have incorporated a mitigation plan in the canal construction project to ensure that the natural environment and health of the population are safeguarded. Activities include erosion control measures, construction of wells and education campaigns focusing on HIV/AIDS and malaria as well as on water-borne diseases such as bilharzia and schistosomiasis.—**MF**



Photo: Sikoro Keita

DANCING CHASSEURS—The KL-4 Canal's groundbreaking ceremony got off to a rousing start with an eclectic mix of music, dance and gunfire.

This work is done in partnership with the technical assistance of the *Office du Niger* and villagers who are providing sweat equity. Another one-third of the land will be developed by villagers independently and 320 hectares will be made available for development by private investors. In addition, USAID and the *Office du Niger* have incorporated a mitigation plan in the canal construction project to ensure that the natural environment and health of the population are safeguarded. Activities include erosion control measures, construction of wells and education campaigns focusing on HIV/AIDS and malaria as well as on water-borne diseases such as bilharzia and schistosomiasis.—**MF**

Mission Possible

Malaria remains the principal cause of morbidity and mortality in Mali. Malaria constitutes the first reason for seeking consultation at health centers and is the main reason for absenteeism at school and at work. In FY 2003, USAID/Mali began sponsorship of a campaign to reduce the impact of malaria through the increased use and sustainable supply of insecticide treated bed nets (ITNs) and re-treatment kits through the public and private sectors. Through support to private sector distribution networks the availability for purchase of high quality ITNs has been significantly increased and vulnerable populations have been targeted through mass media campaigns and behavior change communication messages in the print media, radio and television. At the same time, low income pregnant women and children under 5 years of age are being provided with similar high quality ITNs at no charge through targeted house-to-house distribution efforts.

Long before sunrise in Bamako Mali, four women in leadership positions were on a mission: to support the fight against malaria. Later in the day, they would launch the campaign to distribute 70,000 treated bed nets, without charge, to Mali's most vulnerable population: pregnant women, children under two, HIV/AIDS orphans and widows. Malaria is the number one killer of pregnant women and children under five in Mali, and these four women are determined to change that statistic, starting now.

The First Lady of Mali, Mrs. Touré Lobo Traoré, the Minister of Health, Mrs. Kéïta Rokiatou N'Diaye, the Minister of the Promotion of Women and Children, Mrs. Berthé Aissata Bengaly, and Pam White, USAID Mission Director departed Bamako before 7 o'clock in the morning in a caravan of 15 cars – destination: Ségou. Ségou is the ancient capital of Mali and one of the areas hardest hit by malaria. In Ségou the caravan was met with television cameras rolling, bands playing, dancers jiggging and singers wailing. More than 1,000 people, mostly women, had gathered to celebrate the Herculean efforts by the Government of Mali, the Government of the United States and some private businesses to win the fight against malaria.

The First Lady and the USAID Mission Director had been strategizing for months on how they could best work together. They knew that the First Lady's enormous political will and popularity in the country would be invaluable. They also knew that the campaign must find a way to leave the market open for the sale of bed nets for those who could afford them while at the same time allowing for the free distribution of bed nets to those most vulnerable. Using the local media and an energetic American non-government organization, Population Services International (PSI), they formulated a plan. PSI would devise a plan for equitably distributing the 70,000 free bed nets while at the same coordinating the social marketing side. PSI used radio, television, theatre groups and *griots* to broadcast information on the value of using bed nets. To help in this media blitz, the First Lady recorded a series of messages to the general public – both in French and in three local languages (Bamanan,

Peul and Senoufo) – explaining to the people of Mali why it is so important to use impregnated bed nets. Obviously the messages did not fall on deaf ears – people listened and acted. Sales of bed nets have doubled from a year ago and public awareness of the signs of malaria has increased significantly. The launch in Ségou was another positive step forward in the joint USA/Mali fight against malaria.



Photo: Steve Cowper

JUST KIDDING—The First Lady of Mali (right) tells USAID Mission Director Pam White a good joke in Ségou.

In Ségou, the Minister of Health and the First Lady publicly thanked the American people for caring so much for the people of Mali – not just in this effort, but in so many ways over the years. The spirit of collaboration between the two governments was never more evident. USAID had not been directly involved in malaria efforts for the past five years, so its re-entrance into the field was met with great jubilation. On the 18th of October, the First Lady, the Minister of Health and the Minister of Women and Children as well as the Director of USAID gave out over one thousand free bed nets to HIV/AIDS widows and orphans, to pregnant women, to local doctors for distribution to children under two and pregnant women attending antenatal clinics. A total of 70,000 bed nets have been distributed in hundreds of villages, with PSI providing close monitoring to ensure correct usage and to measure impact.

In 2002, there were 826 recorded deaths in Mali due to malaria, 574 of these deaths were children under five years of age. According to the World Health Organization, only 17% of Malian population consult medical services, which means the total number of deaths was probably five times higher than those reported. Although it is expected more people will have come down with malaria in 2003 due to heavy rainfall, it is anticipated that the number of deaths will be considerably reduced. The response to the joint Mali/USAID messages asking people to sleep under bed nets and telling them how to treat malaria quickly has been overwhelming. Mission Director Pam White says, “You don't need to wait five years to see development results, we will see significant progress this year in our joint fight against malaria – it is indeed heartening to be a part of such a successful effort. Partnerships really do work.”—PW

Ministry of National Education Launches World Education Support Program

Series of workshops helps multi-year activity get underway in six regions and Bamako

BAMAKO—As hundreds of school children cheered and looked on, the Ministry of National Education launched the **Improving the Quality of Education Activity**, funded by USAID, covering the regions of Kidal, Gao, Tombouctou, Ségou, Koulikoro, Sikasso and the district of Bamako. The Ministry presented the program at the end of 2003 as an aspect of its ten-year reform plan, focused on improving the quality of basic education in Mali. The Minister and the U.S. ambassador helped welcome World Education as the prime contractor for a five-year, \$18 million contract to support the ministry in the key areas of teacher training, community participation, and development of a competency-based national curriculum for grades one through nine.

All-day launching workshops held in each target region were huge successes due to the active participation of the Minister of Education, his national directors, regional education office directors and members of civil society—mayors, union leaders, parents and non-governmental organization representatives. The launchings were marked by lively debate over the goals of the program and the methods to be used for training teachers at the school level, increasing the participation of parents and revamping the curriculum to make it more relevant to the lives of Malian children and their families. During discussions, the national ministry laid out its approach and the way it envisions World Education's technical expertise will be of assistance.

During the next five years World Education will work with the Ministry of National Education to bring the ministry's "community of learning" concept to 800 schools, providing on-going training and support at the school level to over 2,400 teachers. The training will not only reinforce science, math and technology skills, but will give teachers the tools to work together to solve their own pedagogical problems and to support each other's teaching. World Education will also provide technical expertise to the ministry's curriculum unit in science, math, technology, life skills, and student achievement testing. At the community level, World Education will help parents better support their children's schools by teaching parent associations how to design school quality improvement plans, transparently manage their resources and administration, and effectively advocate to local elected officials and education authorities for services and financing. Recognizing that parents and communities can better support schools and their children's learning if they are literate, World Education will also establish 200 community adult literacy centers.—**SRT**



Photo: Sana Guindo

FUTURE LEADER—*Maliens of all ages celebrated the collaboration among World Education, USAID, and the Ministry of National Education!*

TradeMali and MaliFinance Hit the Ground Running

Private sector set to benefit from two new projects

BAMAKO— On February 24, 2004, two Malian government ministers, numerous other dignitaries and businesspeople were on hand for the official launching of the **TradeMali** and **MaliFinance** projects funded through USAID and implemented by Chemonics International.

TradeMali aims to increase the export of agricultural products for which Mali has a comparative advantage, particularly focusing on markets in the West African sub-region. A number of commodities have been targeted for support including mangoes, potatoes, red meat, shea butter, sesame, and rice.

MaliFinance will facilitate the access of the poor to financial services by strengthening the microfinance sector and will work with the formal banking sector to develop and strengthen existing and new financing instruments so as to increase the amount of credit going to the agro-industrial sector. The project will also work with the *Centre National pour la Promotion des Investissements* and other organizations to help Mali attract much needed foreign investment.

The Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries was ebullient in expressing his excitement about these two activities, "I am sincerely delighted to note that, with regard to the objectives laid down as well as the results intended to be achieved, your program plans to address concretely the concerns of the government ... by targeting the agricultural zones, you target at the same time the poorest people, namely farmers, women and youth."—**IL**

USAID Sponsors Biotechnology Visit of Malian Delegation to South Africa

BAMAKO—USAID sponsored the visit of a Malian delegation to South Africa between January 25-31, 2004 to learn more about agricultural biotechnology in that country. The goal of the visit was to provide key policy-makers and research scientists with as much concrete on-site information as possible related to research, regulations and commercialization of genetically modified crops in an African country. The fact finding mission was coordinated by ABSP II/Cornell University and hosted by AfricaBio.—**MF**

Better Health through Sanitation

Historic Djenné gets a much needed boost through its activist women

DJENNE—The town of Djenné, founded in 250 B.C., is located in the central delta of the Niger River nearly 450 kilometers from Bamako, the capital of Mali. Some 16,000 people live in an area of just 88 hectares, making it one of the more densely populated regions outside of Mali's larger cities. Demographic pressure coupled with the fact that the town is enmeshed by tributaries of the River Bani results in many health, sanitation and environment problems.

During the course of a visit in May 2003, USAID was approached by the town's women's association. The women, backed by the Djenné communal authorities, speaking at length and with great emotion explained the significant deterioration in the population's health, especially that of women and children, due to the lack of waste management and disposal facilities. They felt that the town was fast gaining an unwelcome reputation as a dirty and unhealthy place despite its renown and tourist appeal as the site of the largest mud-brick mosque in the world. They asked for USAID's help in procuring cleaning materials for the city.

Within a short period of time, USAID, for the equivalent of less than \$20,000 purchased materials for the Djenné women to get to work on giving the town a scrubbing. The USAID donation included: 25 carts, 25 donkeys, 100 light wheelbarrows, 100 shovels, 100 rakes, 500 pairs of gloves, 200 pairs of rubber boots, 500 brooms, 500 face masks and 100 dustbins.

The ceremony handing over these materials to the Djenné women's association took place in a festive atmosphere brimming with hope for the improved health and well-being for Djenné's residents and visitors alike. The town's mayor gave assurances that the program will be monitored for results and that lost or damaged material will be replaced.—**HD**

On a somewhat related note—The imam of Djenné's famous mosque realized a long-held dream when assistance provided by USAID enabled him to be connected to the Internet. "I used to think the Internet was just for people working in offices, but I now realize it is also very useful for religious leaders and for their communities," said Imam Korobara. "With the Internet I can find information for the preaching I do on Fridays, and I can help other Moslems understand what's going on in the world. I'm connected."—**JL**



Photo: Yacouba Santara

DONKEYS AND CARTS READY FOR ACTION—*The town of Djenné is set to benefit from USAID's donation.*

Youth Center Activity Launched in Niger

Young find haven to learn vocational and life skills

MARADI, NIGER—On October 8, 2003, the U.S. Embassy in Niger and USAID/Mali, as part of its "twinning" responsibilities for Niger (a non-presence USAID country), participated in the inauguration of a pilot youth program in Maradi, located in the east of Niger not far from that country's southern border with Nigeria. Funding for this activity was made available through a grant to CARE/Niger, working in partnership with a local non-governmental organization, *Association Nigérienne pour le Bien Etre Familial*. The project creates a series of out-of-school educational and community activities for the youth of urban Maradi with the intent of developing a network of youth with suitable skills to ensure and secure a viable civil society fully integrated into the urban community. Young people will receive training to: 1) increase their level of knowledge with respect to human rights, civic participation in a democratic context and HIV/AIDS; 2) become active in volunteer community awareness raising activities; and 3) learn skills that will enhance employment potential.—**MF**

USAID/Mali

"Reducing poverty and accelerating economic growth through partnerships."

Pamela White, Mission Director
Kevin Mullally, Deputy Director
Mervyn Farroe, Program Officer
Steve Cowper, Executive Officer
Marcus Johnson, Acquisition & Assistance Officer
Kathy Body, Controller

Team Leaders
Ann Hirschey, Health
Jo Allen Lesser, Education
Hannah Baldwin, Democratic Governance
Dennis McCarthy, Accelerated Economic Growth
Dennis Bilodeau, Communications for Development

B.P. 34, Bamako, Republic of Mali, West Africa. Tel: (223) 222-3602 Fax: (223) 222-3933

To learn more about who we are and what we do visit our website: <http://www.usaid.org/ml>